

BACTERIAL BLIGHT OF AFRICAN VIOLET

J. W. Miller and J. F. Knauss¹

African violet, *Saintpaulia ignantha* Wendl., is a native of Tanganyika, Africa, and has large flowers with dark, coppery green leaves which are pubescent and purplish underneath (1). It is one of the most popular flowering house plants today and is well adapted for growing in the home (3). African violets are grown commercially in nurseries as potted plants.

SYMPTOMS. In 1972, a severe disease was observed in a commercial greenhouse range in Florida. Early symptoms appear as a brown to black root and crown rot. Leaf infection usually occurs by progression of the rot through the petioles from infected crowns and roots. Infected petioles and leaves turn greasy brown to black. Wilt and collapse of plants are common. The disease caused by *Erwinia chrysanthemi* Burkholder et al. is found throughout the year, but is most common during the warm months (2). The bacterium can be spread by splashing water and by alternately handling diseased and healthy plants.

CONTROL. No specific chemical control procedures are established. Due to the highly infectious nature of this bacterium, all diseased plants should be rogued and destroyed. Cuttings should be taken only from disease-free plants and should be grown in sterile soil and pots under as cool and dry conditions as practical.

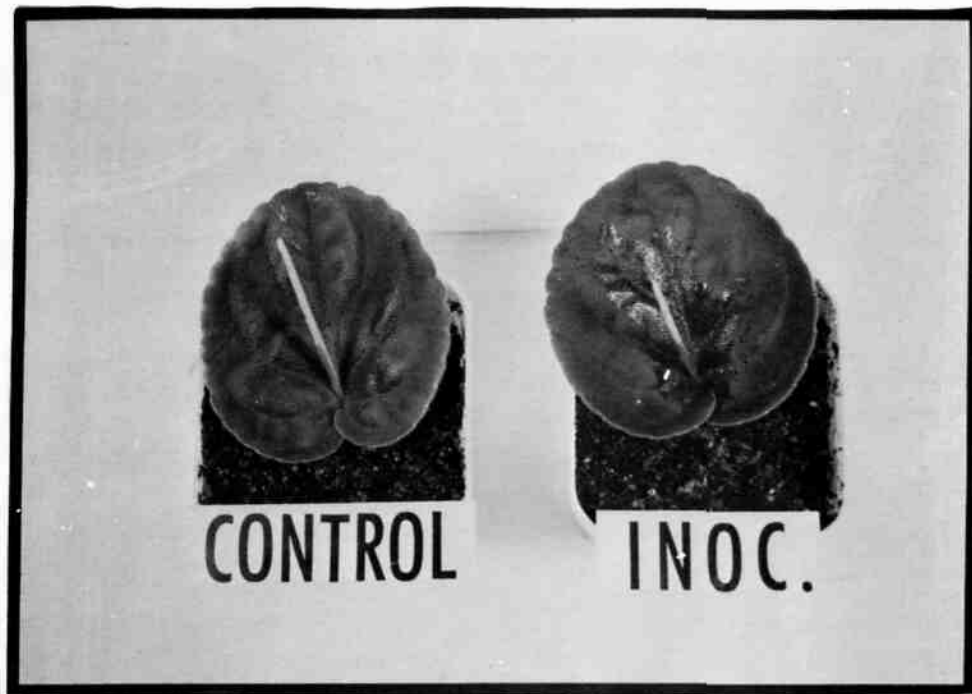


Fig. 1. Unrooted leaf cutting of *Saintpaulia ionantha* with non-inoculated leaf on left, and inoculated leaf showing greasy brown necrosis on right.

¹Associate Plant Pathologist, University of Florida, Agr. Res. Center, Apopka FL 32703.

Literature Cited

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3. Widmer, R. E. 1970. Care of house plants. Ext. Bull. 274, Agr. Ext., Serv. , Univ. Minnesota, St. Paul. 51 p.